

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 SY-05
USSS-00 FBIE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03
MCT-01 /054 W

----- 092640 /54

R 221206Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9981
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 7536

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, JO, SY
SUBJECT: TALK WITH EX-PRIME MINISTER RIFAI--KHADDAM ASSASSINA-
TION ATTEMPT

1. IN TALK WITH EX-PRIME MINISTER RIFAI JUST PRIOR TO HIS
DECEMBER 22 DEPARTURE FOR THE UNITED STATES HE DESCRIBED
FOR ME SOME OF THE DETAILS OF THE EARLY DECEMBER
ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST KHADDAM. RIFAI WENT TO DAMASCUS
SHORTLY AFTER THE ATTEMPT AND LAST WEEK SPENT A DAY THERE
WITH KHADDAM.

2. RIFAI BELIEVES THAT KHADDAM WAS EXTREMELY LUCKY. THE
FOUR SHOTS FIRED BY THE GUNMAN RIDING THE BACK OF THE
MOTORCYCLE WERE WELL AIMED. ONE WENT THROUGH THE BACK
WINDOW OF THE MERCEDES KHADDAM WAS DRIVING AND LODGED
IN THE HEAD REST. IT WOULD HAVE KILLED KHADDAM EXCEPT
THAT IT HAD BEEN FIRED FROM A SMALL CALIBER WEAPON
(ABOUT 7.0 MM ACCORDING TO RIFAI). THE SECOND STRUCK
THE METAL PARTITION BETWEEN THE WINDOWS, WHILE THE
THIRD ENTERED KHADDAM'S LEFT SHOULDER AND PASSED
ACROSS THE INTERIOR OF HIS UPPER CHEST STRIKING A RIB AND LODGED
IN HIS RIGHT ARM. THE FOURTH STRUCK KHADDAM'S LEFT HAND
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APPARENTLY AS HE RAISED IT IN REACTION TO THE NOISE
OF THE PREVIOUS SHOTS. KHADDAM, RIFAI REPORTS, HEARD
ONLY THE EXPLOSIONS AND THEN IN SHOCK STOPPED THE VEHICLE. THE
MOTORCYCLE AND ITS RIDER LEFT THE SCENE. AS PREVIOUSLY
REPORTED, MRS. KHADDAM WAS STRUCK BY A TRUCK SHE WAS
ATTEMPTING TO STOP TO SECURE HELP. A SUBSEQUENT CAR

STOPPED AND TOOK KHADDAM BACK INTO DAMASCUS TO THE HOSPITAL.

3. RIFAI SAID THAT THE DRIVER OF THE MOTORCYCLE HAS BEEN PICKED UP. HE IS A SYTIAN, BUT WITH CONNECTIONS WITH THE IRAQIS AND PROBABLY WITH SABRI AL BANNA'S (ABU MIDAL'S) GROUP WHICH RIFAI SAYS IS MERELY ANOTHER ARM OF THE IRAQI INTELLIGENCE OPERATION. RIFAI SAYS HE EXPECTS THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE ALSO BY NOW PICKED UP OTHERS INVOLVED IN THE ATTEMPT.

4. RIFAI BELIEVES THAT ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS WILL CONTINUE IN SYRIA AND JORDAN, ALMOST, HE SAYS, AS AN INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE OF SYRIAN-IRAQI FEUDING IN WHICH JORDAN IS CAUGHT UP. JUST AS THE SEMIRAMIS HOTEL RAID WAS REPEATED AT THE JORDAN INTERCONTINENTAL, RIFAI BELIEVES THAT THE KHADDAM ATTEMPT WILL BE FOLLOWED UP BOTH IN JORDAN AND SYRIA. GIVEN THE PLANNING AND SECURITY CONNECTED WITH THE OPERATIONS, RIFAI SAYS HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THERE IS A GREAT DEAL BEYOND NORMAL TRAVEL AND SECURITY PRECAUTIONS WHICH CAN BE DONE TO THWART THE IRAQI EFFORTS.
PICKERING

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ASSASSINATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, THREATS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976AMMAN07536
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760469-0915
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761218/aaaaappp.tel
Line Count: 84
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2004 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TALK WITH EX-PRIME MINISTER RIFAI--KHADDAM ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, JO, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM), (RIFAI, ZAYID)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006